

# SIGHT AND SOUND

AUTUMN 1941

VOL 10 NO 39

ARTICLES:

THE SOVIET FILM INDUSTRY

WE CRITICS HAVE OUR USES

QUIZ ON FILM CLASSICS

PLAIN WORDS TO THE EXHIBITOR

NEWS FROM NEW YORK

CONTRIBUTORS:

P. L. Mannoek

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Evelyn Russell

Herman G. Weinberg

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# Sight and Sound

VOLUME 10 NO 39

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WE MAKE no apology for following many of our contemporaries. For the rest of the war we shall appear in this smaller size. Paper must be husbanded, and we are prepared to do our share in its economy.

There will be no change in editorial policy and though the articles may be a trifle shorter than heretofore, they will, we trust, maintain the same standards of interest and information.

The present issue is largely devoted to a series of articles from various hands centring round questions of film criticism and the standards by which an entertainment film should be judged. With the increasing interest in all grades of education in Film Appreciation as a separate subject, we hope that these differing views will be provocative of thought and discussion wherever they are read—at home, overseas or in the quarters of the fighting services wherever they may be.

### British Shorts

IT IS interesting news that the big commercial sponsors have again come into the market. The Gas Industries have given a private view of their new Strand film *Eating at Work*, made by Ralph Bond and Edgar Anstey.

I.C.I. is also in the field with a film on Water which G.B.I. is making. The same company are making another Mrs. T. film for the Electrical Development Association and one on the care of feet for the Central Council for Health Education.

The Ministry of Information and the British Council, the two principal Government sponsors, are both hard at it. The former is issuing its now more or less routine five-minute films on many subjects, some made by the Crown Film Unit, others by the documentary companies, and others by the big studios. The Ministry is also building up its Central Film Library by having films made simply for inclusion in this collection. These films and the copies which are

being made of the best films in the old Empire Film Library are, of course, distributed to all the regional centres and in this way the Ministry are hoping to build up local film libraries which will be of service to the community after the war.

The British Council has of late been plunging into industrial colour films. In this connection Turner Productions report *Border Weave*, made in co-operation with the Scottish Woollen Export Council and the British Council; Publicity Films have just completed a film on Harris Tweed; Technique and Verity report colour films being made on Paints and Varnishes and Excavators.

In short, the British documentary companies have enough work to do, and what is more, they are not allowing their standards to drop just because jobs are easy to find.

### Rhodesia Shows The Way

A CORRESPONDENT in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, has sent us the welcome news that at a public meeting held on July 21st approval was given to a scheme to set up a Rhodesian Film Institute. A concrete scheme for presentation to the Government is to be drawn up and thereafter statutory recognition will be applied for.

The memorandum which led to this welcome decision envisages an Institute very much on the lines of the one in Great Britain save that its finance will come more directly from Government sources, as well as Welfare Societies, Mining Corporations and other interested public and private bodies. One of the main purposes of the new Institute will be to develop the educational use of 16 mm. films and to establish a Central Educational Film Library. It will also act as a Central Advisory Body and propaganda organisation and hopes later to be able to form Local Film Societies.

This is excellent news. We wish the new venture all good fortune.



## Films in India

THE monthly reports of the Bengal Board of Censors make interesting reading if only to show the type of material which is shown in that province. For example, during the month of May this year the Board saw and passed eleven features: eight American, two British and one Australian. The British films were *Old Bill and Son*, and *Under Your Hat*; the Australian Film was *Forty Thousand Horsemen*; and the American product was headed by *Arizona* and *Escape to Glory* and brought up with *The Navy Steps Out*. Not a very inspiring list! and neither for Indian nor European audiences can the entertainment value be called very high! The shorts during the same month contained four Australian M.O.I. shorts like *Australia has Wings* and *It's the Navy*; there were a couple of British Council films, a large batch of Shell films like *Transfer of Power*, half a dozen pop-eye cartoons and some American travelogues. The next month ten features were viewed. Four of these were of Indian origin—the shortest was 12,000 feet and the longest 14,450! There were two British features—*The Case of the Frightened Lady* and *At the Villa Rose*; and the four Americans included *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*. The only newsreel which went through the office each month was G.-B. News, which the list labels "War Propaganda". It is to be hoped that our own Ministry of Information will ask Mr. Alexander Shaw for an interim report on his work in India and have it published. A proper policy in regard to films both for entertainment and for instruction is urgently needed in that great country.

## Berlin v. Hollywood

THE Germans are nothing if not thorough. Their latest plan is to ban all American films from Europe. At the end of July an "international" conference was called in Berlin which

was attended not only by representatives of the film industries of the occupied countries but also by men from the neutrals—Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland. The proposals were simple: Ban American and other films and simply show the European product. To secure agreement the German authorities adopted the simple method of offering films at terms far below any which rival organisations could offer. How far they have succeeded in forming a European film bloc has not as yet leaked out, but there is little reason to suppose that any of the neutral countries were really in a position to refuse co-operation.

On the production side the Germans have pursued their usual tactics of despoilation. Any equipment which U.F.A. wanted has been "bought" against credit marks. The company, thus forced into virtual liquidation, has then been bought by a German financial group. Thus every studio in occupied Europe has been brought under the control of Germany, and is turning out only such product as suits the whims of the German *herrenfolk*. *O tempora, O mores!*

## Death

The film papers of occupied France announce that Walter Ruttmann died in August. He will be remembered as one of the most famous German directors. He is best remembered in this country by *Berlin*, one of the films recently acquired by the National Film Library. In his skill in the art of the film he ranks in the eyes of some students on much the same level as D. W. Griffith or Eisenstein. Since the coming of sound he produced but one great work—*Melody of the World*, which opened "new vistas of film editing and screen beauty" (Rotha). For the rest he was responsible for one of two propaganda shorts, which, despite their glorification of the Nazi regime, showed that he had not lost his cunning.



# WE CRITICS HAVE OUR USES

says

P. L. MANNOCK, *Daily Herald* Film Critic

IN THE theatre, a play, even with a famous stage star, may prove a failure, unworthy of public support, and come off in a week. But a film that runs a week is a success. Even if unworthy, a star's name will mean at least three-day showings in at least 2,000 halls to eight million people. Such is the cinema's commercial advantage. But however profitable to the industry, it is unfair to proper discriminating recognition of the screen's best efforts that the box-office can rely on factors apart from merit or even customers' contentment.

This is where the critic comes in. There are showmen glibly prepared to cite you instances of big money taken by films with a bad Press; and of publicly lauded films which have proved "flops." To confute this type of showman is simple enough. Muddle-headedly he confuses criticism with prophecy, which is not our job. If we were able to forecast commercial results, we should be worth a lot more money; but as a film may coin money in Leeds but play to echoing emptiness in Bristol, we know better (most of us) than to pose as seers. Even with star-appeal, such astrology is too risky.

## The Vindication of Criticism

In point of fact, the very reasons which, it is argued, make film criticism a waste of energy are those which most strongly vindicate its value. The public deserve better guidance than is conveyed in a star or title. The percentage of those who just "go to the pictures" is diminishing yearly; the desire to know something about films even a day or two ahead of showing is correspondingly growing. Word-of-mouth recommendation is largely nullified by

the disappearance of the film before it can be seen.

So much for the practical physical side of first-aid to the filmgoer. Far more responsible and enduring is the healthy influence that competent criticism always exerts upon art; for films are an art, often bad art, perhaps, but frequently reaching a high plane of optical creativeness, force and ingenuity of narrative technique and the imaginative handling of many factors, including human personalities.

Criticism is only the expression of a personal opinion. Yet it is not too much to claim that the professional critic voices a mass of intelligent opinion and makes it articulate. After all, his experience and analytical habit reflects, not such a very peculiar attitude, but one shared by the intelligent cinema public; and the critic's correspondence confirms this. He is therefore in addition a direct means of conveying judgment to those who make films, and who study him with flattering interest. Especially is this true when new ideas and methods, the life-blood of art if it is to progress, confront him, as they happily still do from time to time.

## Some Conclusions

It would be odd if by now I had not arrived at a few firm general conclusions about what one of Mr. Wells's characters called "this here progress" in films. The cinema must have faith in itself. After a quarter of a century, screen technique has developed so much in resource that it should shake itself free from the narrative methods of the theatre and the novel. Films are not a means of popularising plays and books, but a highly distinct form and



medium of story-expression. The best directors "adapt" drastically, even destructively; and they are right in principle. The real effect of a good film consists in what is loosely but comprehensively called "treatment." To propound a definition, I would ask: what is all art but "treatment"?

Camera suggestion, for example, transcends the dramatist's and the novelist's resources at times. Years ago, in *Tol'able David*, the young hero entered a shack wherein two murderous ruffians awaited him. We saw nothing of the deadly fight within. The door slightly flapped to and fro in the wind; presently a pane of glass broke; slight puffs of dust or smoke came into view. The almost complete absence of action produced astounding tension. Here was technique leaving everything to the imagination by sheer suggestion—to me one of the hallmarks of good direction. Conversely, leaving nothing to the imagination is a sign of bad direction. A bad director is apt to use the tricks of the studio for their own sake—a boring and irritating tendency. Fancy dissolves, trucking shots, eccentric angles and a hundred and one other technical devices are simply intrusive unless they are legitimately used to put over a special narrative point. I suspect that more often than not they are the cameraman's exhibitionism—a trait that often needs curbing.

### A Director's Attributes

One of the attributes of a first-class director is his use of restraint to gain force; camera trickery can destroy this by misguided abuse of its powers. Lately I notice, for example, a revival of the flash-back to a degree which almost amounts to a mania. Fifteen years ago and more it was over-exploited in the same way. We grew tired of it then. Now an increasing number of stories are being launched by a narrator going back into the past, resuming and reappearing. This purely

mechanical dodge is even throwing dust in critical eyes; *Hold Back the Dawn*, a very bald story, acquired by this stunt technique an entirely spurious impressiveness.

Sheer beauty of setting and lighting may make an otherwise indifferent picture worth watching; but somehow I never feel this to be a real compensation for other defects. Instead it seems something of a mockery, throwing into sharper prominence the other weaknesses. Gorgeous scenic grandeur, artistic theatrical spectacle and the glossing of star personality by such means always strikes me as the most transparent of the many forms of hokum.

### Should a Critic Moralise?

To what extent, if any, should the critic be a moralist? None—if he is only concerned with intrinsic values; but is he? So great is the influence of the cinema, with its enormous juvenile patronage, that it is surely hard on him if, when a story has an undesirable or mischievous tone, he must always be silent. If it is not his business to point these things out, whose business is it? Must it be left to the clerics and the Public Morality Council?

It is mainly a matter of taste and manners. But then Ruskin, that penetrating old bore, maintained that taste was the only morality. One sees repeatedly, presented without the least suggestion of reprehensibility, vile-mannered children, ruffianism glorified, and couples awaking to find they have got married while drunk. Are we never to cavil at such things and thus tacitly applaud them?

The pulpit is a place to be avoided at all costs if possible. At the same time, if a critic can legitimately extol what is inspiring, must he forego the right to protest mildly at anything degrading? The film trade, especially sensitive to this angle of comment, should not mind a gentle moral protest so long as it stops short of preaching.



But the film trade distrusts us, though it likes us. Not that its professed scorn for critics prevents it from publicising a glowing notice on every occasion. This is as it should be, and is notably valuable when obvious box-office enticements are absent. We must have sent thousands of people to *Stage Coach*; I wish we could have sent more to *Our Town*; in both cases we must have encouraged the studios.

And that is what we are for. We don't expect masterpieces every week, nor do we get them. A good film need not be on a higher plane than that of a good magazine story. But it is reasonable to let the public, interested (say) in Marlene Dietrich, know that in our opinion *Destry Rides Again* was ever so much better than *Flame of New Orleans*. It does Miss Dietrich good to know it, too.

In a business which is at the same time wildly fantastic and ruthlessly matter-of-fact, our function is to encourage the good and to deplore the not-so-good. This is a very different thing from telling the public what it ought to like.

I have more than a sneaking suspicion, however, that the public are under no illusions. They read us increasingly. Shortly before the war I spent a week touring British centres in search of the truth about the cinema, and visited dozens of halls. Manager after manager said to me, in effect: "By the time a picture comes to my hall, my public know all about it—far more than I do very often. They read what you fellows write, perhaps weeks before, and know whether they want to see it or not." That's our case; we make people "shop" for films. If we are fallible, we reply, who isn't? If we are ponderous, may we be forgiven. If we are flippant, it is only because there are many films (as there are many books and plays) which it is difficult for the ordinarily educated person to take seriously.

## Quiz on Film Classics

By CHARLES OAKLEY

DO PEOPLE read as much as they did, say, fifty years ago? In bulk they do. Indeed, more. They read more newspapers, more novels, more magazines, even more memoranda and forms. Perhaps, however, it is not quantity that gives the proper measure, for the modern man may skim a novel in a couple of hours where his grandfather would have digested fewer than a score of pages; and the woman who reads three newspapers may give less time to them than her mother gave to one.

### Films v. Books

Many influences have played their parts in bringing about this change in habits; and the cinema is among them. Not only, or perhaps not chiefly, because it has quickened the rate of living, but because it has provided a new kind of literature. And let educationists not deceive themselves on this point. Films mean more to the majority of British men and women—and adolescents—than do books. That may be true also of children who, in spite of infrequency with which they see (and hear) films devised to appeal to their major interests, nevertheless crowd into Saturday matinees.

More than half the people living in Great Britain will go to the pictures this week. Many will tell others that such-and-such is a good film or that it is a bad film. They mean, of course, simply that they liked it or did not like it, but if pressed to give their reasons their remarks are invariably feeble—the star was well-dressed, there was a rare comic, or someone put over some fine cracks. Actually they have little understanding of why they liked or did



not like the film—partly, no doubt, because their reactions to it were mainly emotional; but partly also because they have never been given any guidance on how to like films.

There are said to be three stages in the growth of our aesthetic appreciation, and the word aesthetic is, incidentally, used in its widest connotation. In the first stage we simply know what we like or do not like. In the second, when we are gaining understanding, we may get wandering among details and, being confused, lose the ability just to be pleased or not to be pleased. In the third we are once more capable of liking and disliking, but now we are able to analyse our general impressions and, while personal bias may be strongly marked in them, we can give, if pressed, sound reasons (or, at least, what we suppose are sound reasons) for the views we hold.

### Teach Film Appreciation

In saying that children should be taught how to understand films it is not suggested that they should be taught the technicalities of studio work—any more than it is suggested that they require courses in make-up and in stage-lighting to understand Hamlet. But they should know something about the devising of a plot, the writing of a scenario, the construction of a film, the use of dialogue, cutting, the values of background musical accompaniment, etc.

This can be done by selecting, say, ten outstanding fiction films for screening as “classics” in schools, and by preparing a text book for *teachers* to enable them to teach film appreciation.

There is certain to be a great deal of discussion on which are the best films for selection as “classics”, and as somebody must make a beginning I put forward this choice.

The older films are available on sub-standard either through the Loan Section of the National Film library

or through the distributors of sub-standard films. It is to be hoped that the newer films are either available just now or will be made available.

### The Ten Film Classics

In making the choice several other points have been kept in mind. Whether the films had been made by an outstanding director or had in their cast outstanding players. Whether they have “dated”, in the sense that they are still accepted in the spirit in which they were made. And whether their themes have links with scholastic subjects, such as history and geography.

The films are:

F. W. Murnau's *The Last Laugh*,

James Cruze's *The Covered Wagon*.

S. M. Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin*,

Charles Chaplin's *The Gold Rush*,

E. B. Shoedsack's and M. C. Cooper's *Grass*,

G. W. Pabst's *Kamaradschaft*,

A modern Western, such as *The Plainsman*, and

Alfred Hitchcock's *The Lady Vanishes*.

To these I would add Marie Seton's *Drawings that Walk and Talk*, and for older children a personal choice of what I consider one of the most remarkable films I have seen, Tourjan-ski's *Volga Volga*.

**Note:** The Editor will be very glad to hear the views of other readers on this list. The subject is intensely interesting and important. The National Film Library Committee's list is: *The Birth of a Nation*; *Intolerance*; *Broken Blossoms*; *Greed*; *The Atone-ment of Gosta Berling*; *Storm over Asia*; *Vaudeville*; *The Love of Jeanne Ney*; *Therese Raquin*; *The Italian Straw Hat*.



# Plain Words to the Exhibitor

ELIZABETH CROSS

THE OTHER day a whole group of us enlivened the dinner hour by a good old destructive tearing to pieces of the cinema in general and our own local ones in particular. We let down our back hair and fairly went to it. In case our thought-waves weren't quite strong enough to penetrate into the right studios and offices let me record some of the more unanimous groans.

## Why Shatter Our Ear Drums

First of all we decided that nearly all talkies and musicals are designed for a public that wants everything twice as loud as nature and feels it is really getting its money's worth when it returns home with ear drums shattered. In the days of the silent film, sub-titles were left on the screen long enough for the slowest reader to absorb (the normal human could read any sub-title at least four times before it switched), the same system appears to be used now sound is with us, but instead of saying everything four times more slowly they say it four times more loudly. Nice work.

We hate the music too, or most of it. Not only is it painfully loud, but equally painfully obvious. Even when someone fresh is allowed to write the "incidental" music to a so-called serious film, they are so cowed that they do it in their sleep and merely cough up the good old phrases that indicate "came the dawn," or "a gallant ship sailed on to her doom," etc., etc. *ad infinitum*. It's very cosy and reminiscent of the days when we admired our village pianist at the pictures with her lovely indexed book which gave you the right music for death-

beds, first kisses, galloping horses and what have you, all at the flick of the thumb. But surely, after all these years, *and* with a war on, we can grow up just a bit . . . or do most audiences really like having the traditional tunes for each emotion? Maybe, they do, but lots of us don't.

## Incidental Music

Incidentally, thinking of incidental music, isn't it still most terribly overdone? Can't people be contented to look at a really grand pictorial shot without being distracted by moaning violins? And isn't it maddening to everyone to have suitable soft music braying out just when the hero and heroine are murmuring sweet nothings? After all some people would like to hear what the pair of them are saying. No, on the whole we think a lot of the music is plain lousy, and all of it could do with a bit of soft pedalling. As to the real rip roaring musicals with the band doing its best to compete with ten thousand sturdy tap dancers, well they give us a headache for a week! Not that we don't *like* musicals, we do, but we just haven't the constitution to stand it. Even the ploughman admitted, under pressure, that he always went to the last show of the evening, "so I can go straight home to bed. I always feel funny afterwards, what with a headache and all, I couldn't go in the afternoon and do any work afterwards!" So that's how it is.

Music brings us, quite unnaturally, to travel pictures. Here the banal taste of the commercial manufacturer gets a wonderful opportunity. Views of



mountains seem to bring out the worst in him, but islands in a silver sea (especially if the sun is setting) run a close second. Not that the music is the worst horror associated with travel pictures. As everyone knows by now, there is the wise-cracking commentator to ruin any merit a picture may possess. I suppose *someone* must have told him sometime, but I imagine that the successful commentator has a wonderful tough hide and he only thinks they're kidding. He's sure they love his little remarks that ginger up an otherwise sober series. We won't go into the question of accents . . . although it does seem possible that a special bunch of talent scouts go round finding chaps with the most revolting voices in order that their futile remarks have fullest flavour.

### Double Features

What else did we tear open and chuck about? Oh, the length of the programmes. We nearly all feel that the average programme is too long, and is particularly so where children are concerned. It is only true hogs that reckon they haven't got their money's worth unless they emerge wilted and worn. You may ask, reasonably enough, why we don't come out when we've had enough. This means that you don't know our local cinemas where it is courting death to try and fight your way out, getting in other folks' view, until the lights go up. No, our only hope would be for the main film to be shown, then an interval given for the weaklings to escape, then have the features and another interval before the main film comes on again. However, as the general run of shorts and features are so lamentably feeble, I can't imagine that anyone would be heart-broken if they were allowed to die out or kept merely for News cinemas. After all, when we go to the theatre to

see *Saint Joan* or a Shakespeare play, we don't expect a few turns by the Western Brothers or some conjuring as well. If we want Music Hall we go for it, so why can't we have either a main film or a programme of short entertainment. As it is there is far too much make-weight about the cinema which only causes waste and an attitude of "anything does."

### Directors' Whimsies

Of course, we were pretty rude about the way many directors still cling to their precious conventions, such as heroines who can't open a door once it has been slammed in their faces, but who just clutch at the handle or lean against the panels. We don't like the way film people pack their luggage either, just chucking in a few fal-lals in a free and easy way, snapping the locks and then turning up at the end of their journey with masses of immaculately pressed clothes that materialise out of thin air. We don't much like the convention, either, that rich people (in faultless evening dress) can get as drunk as they like and are merely amusing, while poor people always beat up their wives or fall over cliffs and get drowned if they take a few extra beers. These are just a few, but I don't want to wear you out, and anyway I bet you've got some you could add yourself.

### The Organ

Oh, and the organ . . . my, my, how we hate that monstrosity. But then, we *must* be queer. After all, nearly every cinema has one, and I've never heard of an infuriated audience smashing it up, so I suppose it's a habit that grows on you, and if you go on long enough you really enjoy hearing its elephantine trippings and seeing the master bottom sliding up and down his versatile bench. Oh well, what a lot we've to learn.



# Films of the Quarter

Reviewed by EVELYN RUSSELL

SOME years ago there was a radio play with the title "The Flowers are not for You to Pick." If I remember rightly the accent came on "you" and again, if I remember rightly, the poor wretched "you" in the story was never able, for one reason or another, to pick the flowers he wanted so badly.

For "you," substitute "the British Film Industry," underline "flowers," and add, in parenthesis, "Buds are O.K.," and there you have the American Film Industry talking.

Or so it would seem. The early plants of our home industry this year were healthy and promising. "More and better British films in the summer," says I to myself. But, alas, the bulk of the harvest festival prizes have been won outright by our friends—and rivals—across the Atlantic.

## U.S. Films are "Full"

That is not to say their product is perfect. By no means. I have yet to see the film in which no fault can be found by the hypercritical. It is the *fullness* of the appeal of so many American films lately that makes our own efforts by comparison seem anæmic.

In *Pimpernel Smith*, for instance, the atmosphere of spying and suspense in Nazi Germany does not compare with that produced in *Underground*. Maybe the late A. G. Macdonnell who wrote the novel from which the film is taken and Leslie Howard, who directed the film and played the lead, felt it would not become an Englishman in Germany to notice or be visibly affected by Nazi "methods." There is, however, no reason why these "methods"—of which, after all, there is abundant proof in official white papers—should not of themselves have been more truthfully

depicted. In *Underground*, director Vincent Sharman makes no bones about it. He uses all his ammunition all the time and the realism of this film, in consequence, is almost overwhelming.

## Give Asquith More Scope

Then, of course, *Man Hunt*. There is, unfortunately, no Fritz Lang amongst our producers and it is perhaps as well that the author of "Rogue Male," from which the film was taken, did, although an Englishman, succumb to an American offer. He may, if he is an optimist, have expected the film story to be entirely his own and be tearing his hair now at the introduction into the former of the little street girl with an accent or the costers, who danced in their pearlyies in the early hours down by the docks, or even the policeman, to whom some critics seem to have taken such violent exception. On the other hand if Mr. Geoffrey Household could for nearly two hours become an ordinary cinemagoer and view *Man Hunt* from that angle, he will, I feel sure, agree with me that it is a thriller "par excellence," vivid, emotional, cruel and breathless from the first to the last shot, which last shot is, by its implications, the most thrilling of all.

Please do not think I am decrying the work of our own ace-director, Anthony Asquith, I am not. What I am saying is that so far the fullness of appeal goes to our friends. *Cottage to Let*, for example, very good thriller as it is, is good in a small way, if you see what I mean in comparison with *Man Hunt*. The story is topical, dealing as it does with a Fifth Column organisation, a remote cottage in the High-



lands, and a rescue R.A.F. pilot, and the weight of the acting falls upon those clever artists, Leslie Banks, Alastair Sims and John Mills, with a dash of Jeanne de Cassalis for fun. All that is good, but surely our best director should have scope to deal in a much larger way with whatever type of film he is going to handle.

*Dangerous Moonlight*, ably constructed and well directed by Desmond Brian Hurst, is nearer the idea. Here again the story is topical. It begins in Warsaw during an air raid and works its way to England, via America, in time for the Battle of Britain. The main protagonists are a Polish airman who was a professional musician and an American woman journalist. There is in the film a clever blend of private lives with great events and it may be lack of sympathy, especially just now, with the woman's attitude to her husband who wants to fight, that detracts somewhat from the general appeal of this production.

### The Disneys

The main interest, however, since our last issue, lies in *Fantasia*, *The Reluctant Dragon* and *Hold Back the Dawn*, in that all three present a different aspect of film entertainment. Music in colour form was experimented with in this country some twenty to twenty-five years ago. Nothing much came of it and the people concerned went to America, since when I, personally, have heard no more of their efforts. It has been left to Walt Disney to exploit the idea in a big way and turn it into something that may or may not appeal to the vast army of cinema-goers that now exists. Actually, of course, he has been business man enough to remember the large percentage of that army to whom music, *per se*, means very little and for them he has included *The Chinese Mushrooms*, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, and *The Dance of the Hours*. Each of

these three could just as well have been Disney shorts in any other programme.

Bach's Toccata and Fugue in *Fantasia*, translated into abstract colour designs and Stravinsky's "Rites of Spring" are to my mind the most satisfying and Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony the least successful in this production, but there can surely be nothing but the sincerest admiration for Walt Disney and his band of enthusiasts that they should have had the courage to experiment.

In much lighter vein but still fresh in idea is *The Reluctant Dragon*, which shows you and me, in the guise of that amiable and delightfully inconsequential artist Robert Benchley, nosing around the Disney studios seeing a bit of this and a spot of that in the making, but all of "Sasey Junior," "Macdonald's Farm," "How to ride a Horse," "Baby Weems," and eventually *The Reluctant Dragon* itself. This is ideal entertainment which must satisfy to quite a large extent those people who have said so frequently, "I wonder how he does it"?

*Hold Back the Dawn* again is different, in that it uses a narrator, Charles Boyer himself, who tells his story to a film producer. In the main the narration covers his thoughts and reasons for the subsequent action while the picture covers the action itself. The acting is superb. Olivia de Havilland has to my mind done nothing previously to touch her performance as the unsophisticated little back-town American school teacher who falls for and believes in the lying, cynical devastatingly attractive gigolo, Georges, until he himself realises for the first time in his life that a woman really does matter to him. The atmosphere of Mexicala, full of anxiously waiting would-be immigrants to U.S.A. is nostalgic in its reality and Charles Boyer himself has reverted at last to the un-Hollywoodised Charles Boyer of the French School in which he



established himself as a great artist. Mitchell Leison is to be congratulated on his direction.

One other film, partly for its subject, but mainly for its acting, has left a vivid impression on me, and that is *A Woman's Face*. Joan Crawford gives an extraordinary performance as Anna Holm whose consciousness of bad disfigurement had turned her into a criminal. The gradual change from this state of mind to that of a normal, lovable woman is quite brilliantly depicted by Miss Crawford.

There has been, too, the usual quota of indifferent Westerns, but one good one, *Billy the Kid*, has crept in. Made in Technicolour with Robert Taylor in the title role, and Ian Hunter and Brian Donlevy in an excellent supporting cast there is plenty of sharp-

shooting, and fast riding with Bob really quick on the draw although left-handed.

It is such a pity, isn't it, that Deanna has had to grow up. No more new films of that attractive child with the enchanting voice. Instead, Deanna Durbin, film star, glamourized and written around so that she can use the sophistication her mezzo-soprano voice now demands. Inevitable, but rather sad, really.

And, of course, there was *Target for Tonight*. Like the olive in my cocktail I have left it till last. Documentaries are not my pigeon, I know, but in comparison with productions this film can surely be allowed a special prize. It is one of the few flowers we have had the *nous* to pick. Bravo, Crown Film Unit!

## IVOR MONTAGU on *The Soviet Film Industry*

EVERYBODY knows about the Soviet films of the great silent days, the Eisenstein and Pudovkin classics, "montage" and its influence on American features, British documentaries, etc. Not so much is known about the Soviet cinema of the talkie era.

Just at the time when the industry outside U.S.S.R. was undergoing the conversion from silent to sound (1929) was the period in U.S.S.R. of the Five Year Plan—the period of intense industrialisation to make U.S.S.R. as far as possible independent of the outside world for its necessary machinery. This applied to the film industry as much as any other. Before that time every scrap of film came from Agfa, every camera from Debie, and so forth.

Every form of stock and apparatus is now Soviet made. From near zero feet of film previously to 183.6 million feet in the period 1931–1933, 1538.1 million in 1937–1939. For 1942 alone 1,540 million feet was to have been the estimated output.

The Soviet film industry has its own sound system, colour system (two colour only), cartoon system, animated puppet system, three dimensional system (with normal camera and normal projector using only a small extra attachment, no eyepieces for the audience, and a complex wire screen weighing many tons).

The increase in the spectator network parallels the increase in technical resources. Film projection units numbered 9,000 in 1931. 29,200 (17,000 in



the villages) in 1934. It is obvious that an increase on this scale, a part only of general industrial increase, was bound to mean a much later general turnover to sound than in the rest of the world.

### Some Statistics

The sound situation has, indeed, only been completely set right in the current Five Year Plan, the Third. Relevant figures include the elimination of all silent screens and increase of sound projection units from 9,000 in 1937 to 60,000 last year (exclusive of those in schools and other places not open to the general public). 50,000 standard and 40,000 substandard sound projectors, with 35,000 electrical generating apparatus for portable work, in the countryside alone! Cinema accommodation (accounted on a basis of annual occupation of seats) rose from 310 million in 1928 to 950 millions in 1939 and was expected—but for the war—to attain 2,700 millions (with 45 per cent in the countryside) by the end of this year.

This colossal transformation and increase presented obvious production difficulties. The methods developed for the silent cinema did not fit those for sound. The mixed character lasting several years did not help. Further, the simultaneous change in Soviet life meant new thematic problems that the traditional methods of the Soviet cinema were inadequate to solve. The mass scene, the type as hero, rapid action—these had been suited to the period of civil strife and hard living. With the growth of prosperity, with the development of the New World, emphasis of interest turned, as it was now able to devote the energy to turn, to the study of the individual, his character, his tastes. "Socialist Realism", which may be best defined as the study of the individual in inseparable relation to his environment, became the keynote of Soviet art.

With this the old, narrow conception of "montage" was inadequate to deal. It was not that the basic principle was wrong—the synthesis of a result from a conflict of impulses—but the hyper-emphasis on pictorial and tempo factors proved inadequate to render the subtler profundities of human character, and attention had to be turned to the "montage" of these latter. The effective solution of these problems, the enormous popularity within the U.S.S.R. of the Soviet talkies of today, may be gauged from the fact that successes are nowadays distributed in 1,000 copies, that the average copy print of features rose from 210 in 1937 to 467 in 1939.

Abroad, however, particularly in the English speaking world, the Soviet film has never recovered from the blow constituted by the late turnover to sound. Subtleties of characterisation dependent upon speech can never be adequately translated by dubbing or superimposed titles, and the English speaking world is not accustomed, as the rest of the non-Soviet world is by the American film, to films in the non-native tongue. Further of course, the leisurely style of Soviet films, made to 1 $\frac{3}{4}$  hour length for single feature showing is another barrier for English and American audiences used to double features of a snappy 65 minute length.

### Russian Production Methods

Points of interest to British film makers that may be briefly noted are:

*Specialisation of Studios.* In addition to Mosfilm and Lenfilm in the two chief Russian cities, there are special studios for children's films, cartoon films, scientific films, news films (including documentary). There are producing studios in Ukraine, Byelorussia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, etc., each making films in the language of these various republics, with sometimes Russian as well.



*Entry into Industry.* This is not casual. There is a film college with faculties for directors, cameramen, editors, acting, production, etc. The education embodies the widest cultural boundaries, Marxist philosophy, history of the theatre (for every film actor and director), history of painting (for every director and cameraman), etc. H. P. J. Marshall is the only non-Soviet citizen who has graduated through this course. Practical work on specially assigned films from normal post-graduate, as well as summer vacation work.

*Hours.* Strictly limited formerly to 7, more recently to 8 per day, with studio administrators fined for permitting overtime.

*Team Work.* Every production unit has a "club room", where are copies of the script at all stages, set and costume designs, etc., so that everyone shall know what is going on and be able to make suggestions. Suggestions come from outside too—several directors publishing their scripts as serials in the magazine of a "patron" factory, to gather suggestions before production. There is also a "film club" in big cities including for discussion and social life, all those in the industry. There are discussions between directors, actors and scenarists of children's films, and hundreds of "child critics" after these latter have seen the films made for them. There is a weekly "Kino", and a monthly theatrical journal "Iskusstvo Kino" (Film Art) for discussion of news and problems.

*Schedules.* There is the extraordinary spectacle of directors on various anniversaries undertaking as a social duty to bring their costs and the schedules down by so much per cent in the coming year!

*Rewards.* Big successes bring in royalties not only to director, scenarists

and stars, but to quite a number of these on the unit. Eighty-five out of one hundred and sixty-five Stalin prize-winners were film people. Civil decorations (Order of Lenin, Order of the Red Banner of Labour, etc.) are dished out not only for smash-hit pictures but for first-class work of any kind. It is quite a usual thing to see cutters and lab. workers in the list of awards. A projectionist, for example, will receive a decoration for, over a period, having a clean screen, no breakdowns, and organising discussion groups on the films he shows among both adults and children in the villages visited. In the Finnish war, the decorations given cameramen for work under fire at the front were not civil, but military, just like those received by the soldiers whose perils they shared and whose heroism they not only equalled but recorded.

### Effects of the War

With the war, film workers immediately renounced their rigid hours restrictions. Most of the famous film writers are doing double work, on their own schedules and on short propaganda films. Some of these are highly ingenious, favourite characters from well-known films stepping from the screen to address the audience, show them new and old scenes mixed by trick-work and draw morals from them, etc. Eisenstein is working on Russian versions of British M.O.I. pictures. Pudovkin is turning out war shorts and has written me that Dovzhenko was doing the same in Kiev to the last moment. There are scores of newsreel cameramen at the front. One notices it because in Soviet newsreels every cameraman in the front line gets a credit on the title that introduces his item in the reel.



# News from New York

HERMAN G. WEINBERG

HOLLYWOOD has completed an aggressive programme to refute charges that the screen is being used here as a propaganda medium for political interventionists. By the time this appears, industry leaders will have testified as to the record of its co-operation with government departments in the all-out emergency programme for national defence. Meanwhile, films with a war background continue to hold popular attention and, despite the suspicious (or frankly stupid) "isolationist" stand of such Congressmen as Wheeler and Nye, whose attack against Hollywood was not altogether free of the all-too-familiar taint of anti-Semitism (which appears to be an inevitable corollary of the "isolationist"), Hollywood shows no signs of reducing its schedule of productions that deal with vital phases of the present conflict. (It is a curious thing, and one worthy of extended research, that neither Wheeler nor Nye have objected to Nazi propaganda films, which circulate freely in the United States, among such theatres in German locales as will show them.)

## A Strong Plot

*Sergeant York* by posing the problem of a conscientious objector faced with his conscience at a moment of great crisis, and resolving this conflict in himself by joining his comrades at the front, was a good start for Hollywood to have made. Told simply, almost as a parable of Good and Evil, its message is as applicable to-day as it was in 1917-18. Its artistic integrity is injured somewhat by its emphasis of "the hero and his reward", ending a little too "pat" for comfort. What Pudovkin could have done with an

actor like Gary Cooper in the middle twenties!

In any case, *Sergeant York* is just a beginning. Hollywood has announced *A Yank in the R.A.F.*, *Burma Convoy*, *Flight Patrol*, *Dive Bomber*, *Captains of the Clouds*, *Tommy in the U.S.A.* (which will be written by Laurence Stallings, author of *The Big Parade*, of fondest memory), *Passage from Bordeaux*, *Joan of Paris*, and others, whose titles are descriptive of their content. Let them be honest and they will be good. They needn't contribute to film art. They must continually remind us of what we, here, are too apt to forget. The art of the film can wait, as the art of living is waiting, for that happy day when art and living can once again flourish. Meanwhile, there is as an apt expression might have it, a "heluva film" waiting to be written, a la "*Citizen Kane*", around the ignominious decline of an erstwhile national hero. I refer, of course, to Lindbergh.

## New Comedies

Of the new films, that are trying to carry on valiantly in the face of violent headlines in the newspapers, news reels from the Eastern Front, and endless radio communiqués from the warring capitals, a lone trio of comedies has succeeded in lightening the burden of the past war months on the American psyche, if we except the occasionally amusing slapstick of Abbott and Costello in their military farces. (When the war is over, I should like to see Costello as *Schweik* in Hasek's great satire, but that can wait.) Disney made a disconcerting hodge-podge out of *The Reluctant Dragon*, apparently feeling that Kenneth Graham's fantasy was



insufficient for a feature film. We can dismiss the self-advertisement of "life behind the scenes at the Walt Disney studios" with a tolerant smile, and go on to the dragon sequence which has moments of puckish wit, and which makes one hope that some day Disney will do *Don Quixote*. Until then, we can look forward to *Bambi*, from Salten's novel on the life of a deer in the woods; *Dumbo*, the story of a cute little baby elephant who drank champagne; *Jack and the Beanstalk*, Sinclair Lewis's *Bongo* and Kenneth Graham's *Wind in the Willows*.

### The New Ginger Rogers

The second and third of this trio of comedies were *Tom, Dick and Harry* and *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*. The former shows that Garson Kanin has learned his *Beggar on Horseback* lesson fine. The nightmare sequences have all the mordant humour of that memorable Cruze satire, though the film as a whole has not the lyricism of the famous Kaufmann-Connelly play. But Ginger Rogers is bright and appealing, as always, in it, and it's a good American fairy tale, with just that touch of whimsy which you can blow away, that might even earn an approving smile from that arch-master of this *métier*, Molnar. *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* is also a Molnaresque fantasy of life on earth and in limbo, a rather daring and unique experiment in extracting satire from sudden death, a little reminiscent of the brilliant Hecht-MacArthur, *The Scoundrel*, though by no means keyed in the dark tones of that exotic picture. Robert Montgomery plays it with just the right oblique touch. Credit Alexander Hall and the writers for the boldest American film of the season. No one is sorrier than I am that Lubitsch's remake of his sly *Kiss Me Again* (now called *That Certain Feeling*) is a dud. This is the blandest vintage to date from that master vintner of them all in the field of social satire. Perhaps he will redeem himself

with *Sundown*, which he has produced with Henry Hathaway, or more likely with *To Be or Not To Be*, which he will make from a story by Melchior Lengyel, his former collaborator. And devotees of René Clair, I am sure, will refuse to believe he had anything to do with *The Flame of New Orleans*. If it was just to prove he can photograph Dietrich as enchantingly as ever von Sternberg could, that is not enough. She is enchanting—Q.E.D. Now let us get on from there, especially let us get on from *A Nous la Liberté* or even from *The Ghost Goes West*.

### An Error of Judgment

That leaves *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *The Little Foxes*. They show Hollywood at its worst and pretty nearly its best—*Greed* (1923) is still greater as a study in avarice than *The Little Foxes* (1941), and Erich von Stroheim by far a more profound director than William Wyler, but *The Little Foxes* is good enough for 1941, after we have lost so much of the advance made by the silent film, but there is no excuse for the weary remake of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, with Spencer Tracy. I don't think what the world needs right now is another retelling of this Victorian story, but if it had to be done, then why not in the light of modern psychology? Unhappily, it wastes the talents of everyone connected with it. It has nothing new to say, especially in relation to what we now know about schizophrenia. For Spencer Tracy it must be not less than embarrassing. *The Little Foxes*, on the other hand, is a cold study in human greed, with shocking moments when they should be shocking. It compromises less with the truth than almost everything we have seen from Hollywood in many moons of assorted screen junk. Sam Goldwyn (who also produced *Greed*), Lillian Hellman, its author, Bette Davis and William Wyler can take deserved bows for this one.



## Things to Come

As for the rest, Frank Capra will do *Arsenic and Old Lace* (a waste of his talents); Sam Wood will do Hemingway's *For Whom the Bells Toll* (which already promises to be as unlike the book as can be imagined); Preston Sturges will offer *Sullivan's Travels* (which, after *The Lady Eve*, promises to add to the gaiety of the winter season); Hitchcock will present *Suspicion* (from the play, *Before the Fact*); John Ford's contribution will be *How Green Was My Valley* (set in a Welsh mining town); Reinhold Schuenzel will offer *New Wine* (a musical on Schubert which, you can be sure, will not come within several hundred light years of his unforgettable *Amphytrion*); Max Fleischer will do a feature cartoon, *Mr Bug Goes to Town*; Jean Renoir will do *Swamp Water* (I cannot imagine what a melange this will be!); Arnold Pressburger will do *Shanghai Gesture*, Josef von Sternberg directing (which sounds good); Gregor Rabinowitch says he will re-make Max Ophuls' *Liebelei*, with Danielle Darrieux (but why not with Ophuls, who is here?); there will be a new Garbo comedy; Lubitsch will do an anti-Nazi *Ninotchka* (which sound like a happy idea); Duvivier, unable to remake *Un Carnet de Bal*, has written a new story, *Lydia*, somewhat similar, albeit lacking the air of disenchantment that made the French film so memorable; Orson Welles has sold a new character idea to Charlie Chaplin; Gabriel Pascal has announced *Arms and the Man* as his next Shaw picture; Monty Woolly is being talked of for a screen biography of Shaw; Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* will finally be filmed; Chaplin will re-issue *The Gold Rush*, with an original musical score that he is now composing for it; Disney is doing a group of training films for Canada; Lewis Milestone will do Steinbeck's *The Red Pony*; Hemingway says he will go to Africa to help the forthcoming filming of his story, *The Short,*

*Happy Life of Francis Macomber*; Elisabeth Bergner is making a film in Hollywood; and it is bruited about here that both Shaw and H. G. Wells are coming over.

## Documentaries

Soviet films are again showing (and popular) on Broadway; Robert Flaherty, that Herman Melville of the camera, has produced a governmental film; Paul Strand and Leo Hurwitz will release their film on Civil Liberties; *Native Land*; the Museum of Modern Art's Film Library is showing a cycle of 300 films tracing the history of the motion pictures and what an orgy it is! The Steinbeck-Herbert Kline documentary, *Forgotten Village*, about governmental reforms among the backward peasants of Mexico, might have seemed better than it is if Mr. Kline had not thought fit to disparage Eisenstein's Mexican venture so. But not even that *faux pas* can relieve its dullness. How about something for the adults? Say, Carmen Amaya as the Mexican girl in James Cain's *Serenade*, directed by Lewis Milestone.

New York, September, 1941

## Appeal

If owners of 16mm. "Talkie" Projectors can spare their equipment, they are urged to do so for the benefit of the many units of the Forces stationed in out of the way places. Many of the boys have no form of entertainment whatever to relieve the boredom and monotony inevitable in such circumstances. In many instances, too, there are no funds to buy equipment. We appeal to the generosity of our readers to release their 16mm. Talkies either as gifts or on loan. Particulars should be sent to Mr. Wallace Heaton, 127 New Bond Street, London, W.1, who has undertaken to handle the matter and also to defray minor expenses.



# LADY HAMILTON

reviewed by Dr. Rachel Reid, of the  
Historical Association

LADY HAMILTON is a good entertainment film, with unusually good acting in all parts. The settings are also good, with the rather serious exception of the battle of Trafalgar, which is—perhaps unavoidably—quite comic in its unreality. The reason for presenting Lady Hamilton throughout as the sylph of Romney's portrait instead of as the very stout woman who captured Nelson is obvious. Not so the reason for the failure to alter her dress in accordance with the change of fashion during the thirty years covered by the story.

Historically the film is worthless. In the main, it follows the story of Lady Hamilton as set out in Southey's "Life of Nelson." This was based on Lady Hamilton's own estimate of herself, and in it facts detrimental to her are either glossed over or ignored, while others are given an unwarrantably favourable interpretation. The heroine of the film is certainly not the Amy Lyon, self-styled Emma Harte, who had been the mistress of several men, and the mother of at least two illegitimate children, before Sir William Hamilton took her off his nephew's hands to enable the latter to redress his fortunes by marrying an heiress. Emma set herself from the beginning to marry her new protector in order to punish the man who had discarded her; but she did not succeed until she had been Sir William's mistress for nearly five years.

The real Lady Hamilton was indeed beautiful (at least in youth) and amusing, but she was also vain and shallow, self-centred and self-seeking, illiterate, common and quite amoral. The part she played in politics was in

reality a very minor one—that of messenger between her husband, the British Ambassador, and the Queen of Naples. Affairs were settled quite correctly and with dispatch by the proper officials without her intervention; but in her capacity of go-between she had to be told of them, and her vanity did the rest. Unfortunately, she was able to persuade Nelson to accept her own view of herself and her influence at the Court of Naples; and out of sheer gratitude he became her adoring slave. This is well brought out by Laurence Olivier in the part of Nelson. It is, however, well for the hero's reputation that we are not shown him accompanying the Hamiltons like a tame lion from one European capital to another during the months of peace after Amiens. It was perhaps excusable to take Lady Hamilton's own view of herself and her life for the sake of a good picture; but no possible excuse for representing both Sir William Hamilton and Nelson as leaving her destitute. Between them, they left her £1,300 a year, £7,000 in cash, furniture, pictures and a country house; and the poverty in which she undoubtedly ended her days was due entirely to her own extravagance and gambling debts. Even so, she was not destitute, for Nelson left £200 a year for the maintenance of his daughter.

It hardly compensates for the injustice to two honourable men that the opening scene is just as unfair to Lady Hamilton. It was in London, not in Calais, that she was imprisoned, and for debt, not for being drunk and disorderly. But we have learnt that historical truth is the last thing to be looked for in an "historical" film.



## **H. A. V. BULLEID,** *author of "Trick Effects with a Cine Camera,"* tells *how he analyses a film*

THE FRAMEWORK for film analysis consists of the production data plus details of the personnel responsible; the compilation of which involves combing all available Cinema reference books and fan magazines. The necessary information comprises Producer, Date, Country, Review and release dates, Length, Director, Scenario, Photography, Montage, Design, Derivation, Players: and sometimes also Supervisor, Assistants, Special Effects, and Titles. To this list are added any special items of interest that one will come across during the above research, besides outstanding review comments and notes on contemporary films and on other work by the same technicians and players that may be relevant to the film being analysed.

The next move is to show the film to oneself, privately, two or three times, noting down the outstanding sequences and all items of special interest. Then check back on the list of production phases already compiled, to ensure that nothing can have been overlooked and that the notes made include adequate examples of the work of any particularly famous technician or player.

The film should then be played to a small audience, and their reactions and observations recorded: judicious prompting elicits interesting comments. It is essential to rope in both sexes on this occasion, in order to secure a comprehensive reaction, particularly on matters of dramatic and psychologically-motivated action-portrayal.

Next prepare a synopsis of the film,

that is a complete but concise narrative in strictly chronological order, and insert all the comment and information gleaned above. Finally, armed with this, the analysis of the film can begin. It is placed on the re-winder and examined shot by shot, in general quite superficially but closely where directed by the annotation. It is preferable but by no means essential to pass the film through a moviola specially for study of the montage, since the examination of a sequence in movement facilitates research into shot-construction and the impact effect of adjacent shots. For outstanding sequences, the full scenario is written from the film, including shot lengths where these are of interest.

### **How to Examine**

To the novice, the static examination of a film presents several curious features. Firstly, the very small size of each frame makes full examination of pictorial quality difficult; but experience plus a good *and well-arranged* magnifying-glass overcome this. Secondly, the action-content and speed of movement cannot be estimated; here again experience alone enables these factors, as well as the general rhythm of the film, to be readily assimilated. Another facility only acquired after a year or so is that of being able to find one's place in the reel without lengthy groping. Obviously, also, the depth of one's analytical perception increases with the number of films analysed—due *partly* to the education derived from each and partly to the inter-



linking of some production phases between each: thus *Vaudeville* photography throws a light on *Metropolis* photography. Finally, experience alone furnishes a necessary sense of proportion between trivial and fundamental errors: though in this respect it is a great advantage to have produced films oneself . . . for example in *Siegfried* the glimpse of Paul Richter's vaccination marks is a trivial anachronism whereas the famous shot of Krimhild approaching the death-bed is a grave error of theatricalism.

### Examples of Errors

Again, cameramen will sympathise when a shot contains a small error which obviously escaped notice in viewing the rushes: for example, the close-up in Rudolph Valentino's *An Adventuress* (1916) in which a reflection of the cameraman can be seen in the leading lady's eyes. Conversely, many shots and sequences will strike the analyst as being particularly beautiful or profound; and it is by research into these that one's experience is achieved. Examples of such scenes, whose perfection is due mainly to one particular production phase, are: the opening of Eisenstein's *The General Line* (montage): crossing the chasm in *The Lost World* (scenario): Gustav Diessl's last-scenes in *The White Hell of Pitz Palu* (acting): the bedroom and roof-top scene in *Caligari* (design): the cross-roads in *Faust* (photography): and the catacomb chase in *Metropolis* (direction)—though in the latter two the design influence is strongly contributory, a characteristic of the golden period of German Cinema. A fine example of a sequence of outstanding perfection, where acting, direction, photography (camera-angle) and montage (balance, rhythm, and impact of shots) are so perfectly blended in the artistic whole that neither could be singled out separately, occurs in *Pitz Palu* (by G. W. Pabst) when, from a

dangerous ledge, the husband insists on taking the lead.

An important aspect of film analysis is the growing interest with which one pursues research into the limited available literature, as one's knowledge increases: and it must be recorded that the inaccuracies met with are legion. Thus, one book gives Constance Talmadge as the star of *Smilin' Through*; another attributes the version of *Orphans of the Storm* in Pathéscope Library to D. W. Griffith! Worse still, by their implication, are omissions: in "Movie Parade" there is no picture of Rin-tin-tin; in the latest official book on the achievements of D. W. Griffith, no mention is made of his 1919 *True Heart Susie* about which Bardèche in "History of the Film" writes ". . . in it we saw a timid and lovely girl, the unforgettable Lillian Gish . . . and the details were wonderful, too, such as the garden and the lamp out of which Griffith drew simple poetry. . . ." In the case of this particular film, the chief matter of interest is that it contains one long sequence of flawless perfection, occupying approximately the middle 600 feet of reel four: in this sequence is at least one example of every important artistic achievement of the silent film, many of which are now unhappily forgotten.

### What to Read

There are three books about which it may be said that to read them is absolutely essential before embarking upon film analysis: they are "Film" by Rudolf Arnheim; "The Film Till Now" by Paul Rotha; and "History of the Film" by Bardèche and Brasilach. Their inaccuracies are few, and they collectively cover film development and film art. The analyst must, however, take care not to be biased by the personal opinions of the authors: for example Chaplin gags are usually applauded as masterpieces whereas Harold Lloyd's equivalent or superior



gags are derided as mechanical inventions of a staff of gag-men. Again, the Germans are credited with many items of technique actually invented by the French or Americans.

The reader interested in analysis

but without previous experience could hardly do better than begin with *Faust* (4 reels, 9.5 mm.), a film of great beauty but with several faults, of which a detailed commentary appears in the October "Amateur Cine World."

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

By *BERNARD E. GILLETT*, the British Film Institute's  
*Carnegie Campaigner*

THE 1940 Educational Campaign gave a noticeable impetus to films in schools. In fact the most encouraging feature I have come across sometimes with those who last year had held out little hope that any forward step might be taken, is the evidence of progress and the desire to take advantage of the assistance the present Campaign now offers to extend still further. It is also gratifying to find how many Authorities are still making provision in their estimates for further regular expenditure on optical aids.

The work of the present campaign has fallen into four main needs. The first of these is the organisation of Optical Aids Courses, or Film Schools, for the training of teachers in both the technical and pedagogic aspects of the use of optical aids. These schools last two, three or four days according to local requirements and usually include "still projection using episcopes and diasscopes as these can be linked very valuably with the use of film. Lectures, practical work and displays of types of educational films have left the teachers who attended them in a position to use optical aids more effectively and more extensively.

### Teachers' Film Groups

The second point I have noticed is a realisation of the need to form

Teachers' Film Groups. The purpose of these is to give that mutual assistance and encouragement which is necessary for the interchange of ideas and the advancement of the technique in what is still a new art, namely teaching with films. Such groups are often one of the outcomes of Film Schools, and I am encouraging teachers to form local groups, for not only can they assist one another but also the Local Authority to overcome local difficulties and to organise locally to suit prevailing conditions.

It is a self-evident fact that if teachers are to use optical aids as part of teaching technique, instruction must begin in the Training Colleges. In most Colleges this is not being done, and the third need of the Campaign aims at remedying this state of affairs. Lecture-demonstrations are being arranged in Training Colleges for the students, and arrangements are in hand for an Optical Aids Course for Training Colleges, to take place in the Christmas Vacation during January.\* This, I feel, should do much to remedy the position, expressed by many of the lecturers, that they are not as well informed on optical aids as they

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\* Details can be had on application to the British Film Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1.



would wish to be because facilities have not previously existed for them to acquire the information they need.

Since last year, Youth Organisations and Air Training Corps have added their problems for teachers anxious to use films in these fields. In both, the film has an important future and Authorities are asking me to tell them how it can be used. This, as the latest branch of education, has given further scope to the campaign.

### Real Progress

In conclusion, I must record three or four bits of positive work. First comes that which has been done in Stoke-on-Trent, where the North Staffs Teachers' Film Group is one of the most keen I have yet met and in addition to lectures to schools and the Youth Organisation, it has now had a four-day film course.

In East Sussex sufficient apparatus has been acquired since the last campaign to enable a two-day course to be held, and a Film Group to be started.

In Worcester, certificates are given to teachers capable of handling projectors efficiently.

In Birmingham, a complete library system of over five hundred films has been built up and films in such demand that duplicate and even triplicate copies are being purchased.

Finally, in Leicestershire, projectors have been purchased since last year and the formation of a county film library is under consideration. These are but a few of the examples of progress which might be quoted to show the need for the present campaign and are encouraging us all to foresee useful results emerging from it.

## **An Encyclopaedia of Optical Aids**

THE RANGE of activities covered by McKown & Roberts's *Audio-Visual Aids to Instruction* is so wide that it may be most easily defined by a comprehensive negative—it deals with every known way of teaching other than traditional text-book methods.

The width of its range has naturally exercised a somewhat adverse effect on the depths of its penetration in any given direction, and it must be admitted at once that on the technical side the information given regarding projection apparatus and methods leaves much to be desired. Questions of pedagogic method in the use of slides and films are, however, more adequately dealt with.

It is a pity that so little care has been taken to bring the contents up to date. For example, the League Institute of Cinematography and its Journal *Inter-cine*, which went out of existence over three years ago, are referred to among current factors in the field surveyed. In contrast to this erroneous inclusion is the exclusion from the various bibliographic lists of all literature published outside the United States.

However it would be ungracious to search out faults in a book which will be found by the discriminating reader to contain a mass of suggestive and informative material. In particular two types of projection accessory are mentioned which are as yet quite unfamiliar in this country. The first is flexible film-strip 3 inches wide, and the second is the "Flash-Meter" which is a kind of camera-shutter enabling a brief measured showing of picture or writing to be made on the screen with a view to encouraging quickness of comprehension.

AUDIO-VISUAL AIDS TO INSTRUCTION.  
McKown & Roberts. (McGraw Hill Publishing Co. Ltd., Aldwych House, London, W.C.2, 1940.) 21s.



# News from the Societies

## THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

The Governors requested the Colonial Office to make a grant from the Colonial Development Fund to carry out simultaneous investigations in Malaya, Africa and the West Indies into the use of films among native races and to make effective recommendations for its development, in conjunction with the press and the wireless, the other general means of spreading information.

The Education Panel is drafting a memorandum for submission to the President of the Board of Education on the Place of the Film in Post-War Education. It has also decided to produce a new pamphlet on the teaching technique to be adopted in the classroom when using educational films.

The National Film Library has added ten new films of the early period to its Preservation Section and has also acquired a copy of William Hunter's latest Dartington Hall film *Galapagos*. From the Museum of Modern Art have been received 16 mm. copies of the following four new documentaries: *Valley Town*, *Jewish Charity*, *And So they Live*, *Children must Learn*.

## SCOTTISH FILM COUNCIL

The past few months have been a period of preparation by the Scottish Film Council and its associate bodies for the ensuing winter which promises to be an extremely busy one.

During the last session the Central Film Library, which now contains about 1,000 subjects, despatched over 14,000 reels, has taken over the Glasgow Education Committee Library for the duration of the war, and has undertaken Scottish distribution of Ministry of Information films.

The Ministry of Information having installed 16mm. sound projectors in five Scottish Public Libraries, the Joint Committee of the Council and the Scottish Library Association is developing these as civic film centres. M.O.I. films are shown on alternate weeks and the intermediate weeks are devoted to selected programmes of educational films.

The Council's Advisory Committee is now engaged on an investigation into the place of the 16mm. sound film in education. It is at present organising an experiment in a selected number of Scottish schools in which sound and silent films will be used with certain classes with other classes being used as controls.

The Council's associate bodies, the Scottish Federation of Film Societies, the Scottish Educational Film Association,

and the Scottish Churches' Film Guild, have resumed their operations for the new session. Four film societies, Aberdeen, Ayrshire, Dundee and Edinburgh, are carrying on while the Scottish Educational Film Association and the Scottish Churches' Film Guild are continuing their many activities. The three Scientific Film Societies, Aberdeen, Glasgow, and Ayrshire, have commenced their new session and a fourth society has been formed at Ardeer.

## THE MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

In the "New Order Exhibition"—a missionary exhibition devised on entirely novel lines—held recently for six days at Cambridge, films played an important part, ranking of equal importance with the other two elements, namely the exhibits and the talks. The organising committee used only documentary films of high standard, as they were not able to find any specifically religious or missionary films which were considered suitable. The films presented vividly a view of the world as it is, in which the New Order has to be built. At each showing, brief explanatory talks were given to enable the audience to appreciate why the particular films had been chosen. A list of the films used can be sent to anybody interested.

Probably never before at a religious exhibition has the film been used either to the same extent or in the same way, and many people expressed delighted appreciation that the Churches should have sufficient imagination and courage to show films of such high quality and varied appeal. A similar use was made of documentary films at the recent Youth Religion and Life Week held by the Churches of Harrow.

These experiments have shown the need for documentary films made by the Churches on the same lines and up to the same standards as those produced by the G.P.O. Film Unit, the Petroleum Film Bureau, the Ministry of Information, and many others. The Church has no lack of suitable material; when will it make use of it?

## THE BRITISH COUNCIL OF SOCIAL HYGIENE

The British Social Hygiene Council has now established regional offices in six regions where a set of the Council's films is available for lectures and displays in each area. During recent weeks many film shows have been arranged by the Council in factories throughout England, Scotland and Wales. These have included "midnight matinees" during the break in the night



shift, some actually taking place at 2 o'clock in the morning. Programmes, which include M.O.I. films as well as the Council's own, will again be shown in London shelters during the winter.

#### MANCHESTER FILM SOCIETY

The quarter has seen the end of a very successful year, during which the Society has given its members ten standard shows at the Tatler, together with three sub-standard revivals of silent classics.

For the present season we have arranged with the Manchester and Salford Film Society to exhibit films jointly at the Rivoli. This war-time arrangement is working harmoniously, and *La Marseillaise*, *Nous les Jeunes* and *Chapayev* have already been shown. Of two substandard shows, the first on August 29th was a display of Russian silent classics in the National Film Library, introduced by a thoughtful note on his country's life and history from Professor M. V. Trofimov, of Manchester University. The other was devoted to town planning; *The City* was counterparted on the English side by *Medieval Village*, *Big City*, *Architects of England* and *The Builders*. Among those who participated in a useful discussion were the City Engineer and the Housing Director.

One new development of our work has been our co-operation with the Regional Committee for Adult Education in H.M. Forces. As a result regular lecture-displays have been given to the troops on Film Appreciation and other topics. The Hon. Secretary has also spoken to Education Officers of the Western Command on film as a teaching medium.

#### SOUTH WESTERN COUNCIL

IN WHAT may be described as a bifocal concentration of effort, with the educational centre of gravity in the Education Department of University College, Exeter, and the technical centre of gravity in the Film Unit at Dartington, the Film Council of the South-West has succeeded in establishing, in the face of numerous obstacles, a small but carefully selected Area Film Library with some of the best educational films available. Under the same roof, at Dartington, is a larger library of Ministry of Information films in constant demand over the whole south-west region of five counties.

Parallel with this an active educational policy has been pursued at Exeter. By accepting one of the Ministry's projectors and putting on a regular series of Ministry programmes, the Film Council, with the valuable support of the University College, has been enabled to run a full educational programme, including a course for teachers. This has recently culminated in the accep-

tance of the Honorary Secretary's work as recognised departmental work in the College.

#### BOY SCOUT FILMS

With the coming of autumn there has been almost a flood of booking of films. One interesting fact is the number of people who are now running regular programmes, booking films over a period of dates.

At present on the floor of the Studio is a new production which will show the activities of Boy Scouts in war time. The film is being sponsored by the M.O.I. This, of course, will be on standard stock and will be distributed in the usual way.

A new addition to our Library is *Scouting out of Doors*. This is on 16mm. stock and runs for 10 minutes.

#### GIRL GUIDE FILMS—

The eleven 16 mm. silent films in the Girl Guide library are in constant demand, recording as they do various Guiding activities. One film added since the outbreak of war is a most attractive coloured film, taken by Mr. Mathew Nathan. It records the presentations of the gifts made by the Guides to the Army, Navy, and Air Force, from the £50,000 they raised among themselves towards the National War effort, and copies have been sent out to Guides in the Dominions and Colonies who contributed so generously to the fund.

#### THE WORKERS' FILM ASSOCIATION—

The Workers' Film Association has become a registered co-operative society and has decided to form a National Joint Film Committee to act as an advisory body to the Directors of the Association. The Association of Cine Technicians, the National Association of Theatrical and Kino Employees, the Electrical Trades Union, the Co-operative Union Ltd., the National Association of Co-operative Education Committee, the Workers' Travel Association and *The Daily Herald* have been invited to appoint representatives to that Committee.

Readers of SIGHT AND SOUND will be interested to know that the Association has been entrusted with the distribution of the 16mm. copies of all new Russian films by the Soviet War News Agency. Already *U.S.S.R. for Victory*, *Molotov's Speech*, *The Signing of the Anglo-Soviet Pact* and *Local Counter Attack* are being distributed by the W.F.A.

The Film School of the Association held at Oxford recently was a great success, and at a recent Conference at Bradford, delegates from workers' organisations in Lancashire, Yorkshire and Cheshire enthusiastically decided to undertake to organise film shows during the coming months.



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*The photograph on the screen in the illustration is from the Kodascope Library Film 'Volcanoes.'*

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